



NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 330
Lincoln, NE 68508
Phone: (402) 474-2131 Fax: (402) 474-4852
E-mail: nhc@nebraskahumanities.com
Website: www.nebraskahumanities.org

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Contact: Erika Hamilton, (402) 474-2131, ext. 104;
or Michael Cartwright, festival director, (402) 471-4006, mcartwright@nlc.state.ne.us

Book Fest to honor State Poet William Kloefkorn

A special reception planned for the 2007 Nebraska Book Festival will honor the 25th anniversary of William Kloefkorn's designation as Nebraska State Poet.

The reception, free and open to the public, will be held at 8 p.m. Oct. 27 at the Great Plains Art Museum, 1155 Q St. in downtown Lincoln. The evening will include tributes to Kloefkorn and his response, along with opportunities to meet the State Poet.

In 1981, the Legislature commissioned the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities to assemble and oversee a selection committee whose purpose was to recommend a State Poet who would "creatively portray the beauty and dignity of Nebraska, its citizens, its history, and its culture through the written word, and who will serve as the literary representative of the state." Kloefkorn was recommended by the committee and appointed by then-Gov. Charles Thone on Sept. 11, 1982.

Kloefkorn is emeritus professor of English at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln. He initiated the Nebraska "Poets in the Schools" program and has conducted readings and workshops in schools, colleges and universities throughout Nebraska and the United States. His numerous publications include 12 poetry collections, two collections of short fiction, and three memoirs that relate to three of the four elements—water, fire and earth. He is currently working on a fourth memoir to complete the set.

His second volume of memoirs, "Restoring the Burnt Child," has been selected for the 2008 One Book One Nebraska. It tells of a small-town boy's life in the 1940s.

According to Kloefkorn, "Our stories often reveal the variety of experiences that collectively we call our 'education.' It is a good thing, seems to me, for us to write about these experiences, and to share them with others. By doing this we can form and strengthen communities, from the immediate family to the extended one, from a child listening to a nursery rhyme, to a book club discussing the Canterbury Tales. It is a means of defining ourselves, and of learning to know each other in ways we never dreamed of."

The Oct. 27 reception will culminate a full day and a half of free activities and programs celebrating books. Events for adults include a keynote address by Crazy Horse biographer Joseph Marshall III, how to read a quilt, mystery and crime fiction, photography, and how to get into print. Activities for children include visits with the "Real D.W." (sister to the creator of Arthur the aardvark), The String Beans, "Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters" with Leta Powell Drake, and secrets to telling ghost stories.

The complete schedule can be found at www.nebraskabookfestival.org.

Festival sponsors include the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Humanities Council and Nebraska Library Commission. The Nebraska Humanities Council has provided major funding for the festival since its inception as the Nebraska Literature Festival in 1991. Each year, the event celebrates Nebraska's rich literary heritage and promotes the state's growing population of talented, contemporary writers. Other funders include the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Nebraska Arts Council, Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, and the "We the People" initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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